

Pool future sinking

Travis Parnaby

OAKLEIGH Pool may have been open over summer, but did anyone know it?

Community Life Action Group (CLAG) says a lack of promotion by Monash Council has contributed to the pool's declining attendances.

Crowd figures at the pool for December, January and February totalled 14,139 - some 7000 less than the summer of 2004.

Monash Mayor Joy Banerji said the council had "no other expectation" than for attendances to continue to decline.

The pool's infrastructure is

"unsalvageable" and needs at least \$4 million in repairs.

But CLAG president Helena Van Nimwegen said the council had never advertised or promoted the pool.

"People coming into the area don't even know about it," Ms Van Nimwegen said.

"I know it needs work but they are still neglecting to promote it.

"You struggle to find it on the (council) website, it's not listed in the Yellow Pages and if you walk down (Oakleigh's) Eaton St Mall you see signs for Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre (MARC) but that's in Glen Waverley.

"With an upgrade, promotion

and sponsorship, the pool's attendances will increase."

Cr Banerji said the Oakleigh Recreation Centre and outdoor pool was featured on the council website, in the community directory and was "frequently mentioned" in the Monash Bulletin.

"The reality is, people choose to use modern facilities," Cr Banerji said.

"It is our judgement that any promotion beyond what is currently undertaken would be an unwarranted use of ratepayer funds and would make no difference to the participation rate."

Cr Banerji pointed to attendance figures at MARC where 216,955

people attended over summer - an average of 18,000 a week.

"Oakleigh's entire summer attendance is achieved over a seven-day period at MARC," she said.

But Ms Van Nimwegen said that was like "comparing apples with oranges".

"It's a completely different demographic," she said.

Meanwhile, the Oakleigh Pool Steering Committee remains tight-lipped about the pool's future. The council has set aside \$1.5 million in its budget for works at the Park Rd centre.

Cr Gerry Kottek said the plan could be expected within months.